

Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9144

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR. UK. RH

SUBJECT: CALLAGHAN ON RHODESIA

1. FOLLOWING THE UK'S ANNOUNCEMENT FEBRUARY 19 OF ITS
RECOGNITION OF THE MPLA GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA, FOREIGN
SECRETARY CALLAGHAN FACED A BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS ON
SOUTHERN AFRICA DURING HIS PARLIAMENTARY APPEARANCE THAT
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AFTERNOON. THE MPLA. CALLAGHAN EXPLAINED, HAD SATISFIED

HMG'S TRADITIONAL CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION OF GOVERNMENTS. BUT THE ACT ITSELF DID NOT NECESSARILY MEAN APPROVAL OF THE REGIME. FEW PARLIAMENTARIANS OBJECTED TO CALLAGHAN'S EXPLANATION. THE SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGES CENTERED ON THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND WHAT EFFECT THEY MIGHT HAVE ON RHODESIA. CALLAGHAN EXPRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S GREAT CONCERN WITH THE UNPROMISING COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS IN SALISBURY. HE STATED THAT IAN SMITH HAS FAILED TO APPRECIATE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND THAT THE CURRENT TALKS COULD BE THE LAST CHANCE TO AVOID WIDESPREAD BLOODSHED. AT ONE POINT TORY MP ROBERT MCCRINOLE ASKED IF CALLAGHAN WOULD "CLARIFY WHAT WILL BE THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE INTRODUCTION EITHER OF RUSSIAN WEAPONS OR CUBAN TROOPS TO RHODESIA BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT HAVE DISCHARGED THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES?" CALLAGHAN REPLIED: "THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES IN RHODESIA PROVIDED THE REGIME IN RHODESIA ACKNOWLEDGED BRITISH AUTHORITY WITH ALL THAT ENTAILS. I DO NOT SEE ANY SIGN OF THAT SO FAR."

2. THIS MORNING'S PRESS, PARTICULARLY THE TIMES, GAVE FRONT-PAGE PLAY TO CALLAGHAN'S REMARK WITH THE IMPLICATION THAT HMG IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT ACT TO RESCUE AN ILLEGAL WHITE REGIME ASSAULTED BY OUTSIDE, INTERNATIONAL FORCES. FCO MINISTER OF STATE DAVID ENNALS TOOK THE IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY OF A LUNCHEON SPEECH AT THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY TO SPIKE THE SPECULATION. HE READ CALLAGHAN'S COMMENT AGAIN AND STRESSED THAT RHODESIANS WOULD BE ENTERTAINING A GRAND SELF-DELUSION IF THEY SUSPECTED HMG WOULD IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS BAIL THEM OUT. A BRITISH MILITARY INTERVENTION TO RESCUE WHITE RHODESIA WOULD BE "SHEER MADNESS" ENNALS SAID. ONLY AFTER THE "REESTABLISHMENT OF LEGALITY" IN RHODESIA AND CONCURRENT, SWIFT STEPS TO MAJORITY RULE WOULD THE GOVERNMENT REASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

3. COMMENT. CALLAGHAN RESPONDED DIRECTLY TO A SPECULATIVE QUESTION WHICH PRACTICED PARLIAMENTARIANS NORMALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DODGE. HE LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT BRITAIN MIGHT ACT MILITARILY IF CONFLICT IN RHODESIA TOOK ON CALAMITOUS INTERNATIONAL PROPORTIONS. HE DID NOT INTEND TO DIVORCE THAT QUESTION FROM THE ISSUE OF HMG'S RESUMPTION OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL FUNCTIONS IN RHODESIA. THE LATTER CONDITION WOULD HAVE TO PRECEDE THE FORMER.

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